



257 Lawrence Street, Hartford CT 06106 | P (860) 721-7876 | F (860) 257-1148 | www.cceh.org

Testimony for Housing Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly

February 3, 2015 Hearing on SB 170, 409 and HB 5583, 6144

**By Lisa Tepper Bates, Executive Director
Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness**

Senator Winfield, Representative Butler, and Members of the Housing Committee:

Thank you for hearing my testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH), and for your consideration of matters of importance to both elderly and disabled individuals.

My name is Lisa Tepper Bates and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH), a statewide advocacy organization founded in 1982 by shelter staff and volunteers in response to increasing homelessness in our state. CCEH staff and members work together to implement prevention strategies, increase access to culturally relevant support services and stable income, and advocate for permanent affordable housing for all of Connecticut's citizens.

CCEH represents over 75 member agencies, and over 14,000 homeless individuals who experience homelessness annually, to record our opposition to **SB 170, 409 and HB 5583, 6144**. Everyone wants a safe and peaceful place to live, regardless of age and disability. Providers of homeless services work every day to assist people experiencing homelessness in finding affordable housing options that will allow them to leave emergency shelters and transitional housing.

One of the greatest challenges we face is the shortage of affordable housing units across the state. Instead of limiting access to, we should be investing in proactive and productive solutions which support expansion of housing opportunities for those who are disabled, regardless of their age.

Moreover, to end homelessness in Connecticut, we need to create more affordable housing for all populations. Elderly and disabled housing, in particular, is an important housing resource in our efforts to end chronic homelessness (the long term homelessness of people who are disabled).

Decreasing or limiting access to affordable housing for people for nonelderly persons with disabilities would hinder housing opportunities for a population in significant need. Limiting housing opportunities for any group, at any age, should not be an option.

We must all remember the important role affordable housing plays in housing the most vulnerable. This resource is vital to ensuring safe, stable lives for persons with disabilities, regardless of age. A decrease in access to elderly/disabled housing for persons less than 60 years of age, could lend towards an increase in homeless for this already vulnerable population.

An increase in homelessness leads to increases in other state funded costs, such as Medicaid, emergency room and hospital, behavioral health, and criminal justice costs. It will also slow our progress in reaching other homeless populations such as families with children and unaccompanied youth.

Connecticut is currently on track to end Veteran and chronic homelessness by the end of 2015 and 2016, respectively – restricting access to this housing option for people with disabilities will push more people into homelessness and reduce the state's ability to meet the needs of these two populations.

I urge you to oppose **SB 170, 409 and HB 5583, 6144.**